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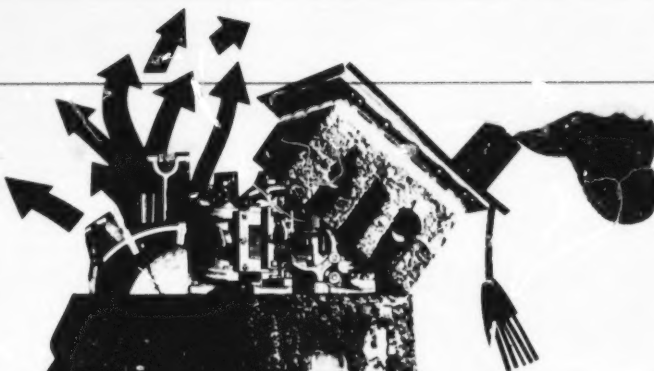
ABSTRACT

The controversy surrounding the meaning of professionalism on American campuses is approached by examining the subject from an historical and trade union perspective. It is contended that faculty unions are compatible with professional needs and desires of faculty. The roots of the American college and university system are examined in conjunction with their historic relationship to the European academic communities. Recent polls and surveys commissioned by the American Federation of Teachers and others reveal that teachers, at all levels, value the achievement of collective bargaining and a union contract. They achieve economic and social benefits and positional security written into enforceable contracts. It presumes recognition that would actively include them in the decision-making process of educational institutions to determine courses of study, resource materials, research, and the granting of degrees. It is claimed that both historically and in modern practice, the terms "profession" and "professionalism" are inherently linked to group action and collective concepts. Unlike medieval European universities, which originated as guilds of master professors, or occasionally students, colleges in America were organized from the top down, with boards of managers to hire and fire teachers, appoint and dismiss presidents, and otherwise be responsible for the enterprise. It is concluded that college faculties today are professional only to the extent that they exercise real and autonomous self-governance. (SW)

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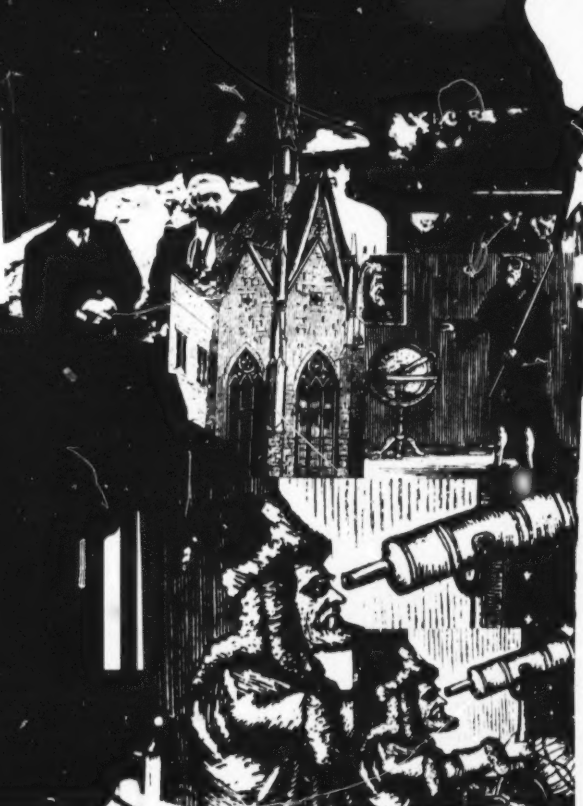
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Unionism and Professionalism: Siblings?

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In recent years, much has been written and said about the changing socioeconomic status of professionals in today's society and the subsequent blurring of the traditional concept of "professionalism."

This article is an attempt to shed additional light on the controversy surrounding the meaning of professionalism on American campuses by approaching the subject from an historical and trade union perspective.

It is our contention that faculty unions are compatible with professional needs and desires and that the faculty collective bargaining movement is in many ways an almost unconscious groping for a role in university governance enjoyed by some faculties, through their guilds, centuries ago. We believe the logic of our conclusions becomes clear when the roots of the American college and university system are carefully examined in conjunction with their historic relationship to the European academic communities. In fact, we believe that professionalism and unionism are siblings.

Recent polls and surveys commissioned by the American Federation of Teachers, and others, confirm what our instincts in this regard have for years suggested. As a result of these surveys, two initial findings immediately surfaced.

First, teachers, at all levels, once having achieved collective bargaining and a union contract, cherish it. The advancement in economic and social benefits which it assures, coupled with positional security—tenure, for example—written into enforceable contracts have served to

solve problems common in the lives of nearly all faculty members.

Second, these surveys revealed that a long-held goal of teachers remains a high priority: Clear identification as professionals, an occupational category that assumes recognition for special academic preparation and achievement. It presumes recognition that would actively include them in the decision-making process of educational institutions at levels that determine courses of study, curriculum, research, resource materials and the granting of degrees.

We find that in spite of the spectacular growth of unionism within educational institutions over the past decade, one persistent ghost from the past continues to haunt the ivory towers of academe: Professionalism! There is without doubt more magic and mythology related to this word, especially among educators, than to practically any other word in the English language. Though sometimes subtly, but often overtly, the word "professionalism" inevitably pervades every discussion of faculty unions and collective bargaining.

What is the relationship, if any, between unionism and professionalism? The National Labor Relations Act speaks of professional and nonprofessional employees. Often, it is argued that one cannot be an employed professional, i.e., simultaneously an employee and a professional. School board and board of trustee bylaws frequently refer to "unprofessional" conduct. Charges of violations of professional codes of conduct or ethics further complicate the issues involved.

TORTURED CONFUSION

The tortured confusion faced by many academics is probably best expressed by Dr. John Silber, president of Boston University. After a brief period as a member of the teaching faculty, he entered university administration. Since then he has been in continuous disputes involving faculty, student and administrative relationships because he honestly believes that he is an integral part of some inexplicable schizophrenic alliance in which he functions partly as an administrator, partly as a faculty member and sometimes as a learner. The National Labor Relations Board has ruled Silber a part of management. He is listed in the university catalogue as a tenured member of the faculty. He says: "Neither uneducated nor inarticulate, I see no reason why, as a teacher or a scholar, I should have my interests articulated for me en masse through a bargaining agent . . . I find it dishonest and degrading to pretend that I, while a teacher and a scholar, am someone's employee—alienated, exploited, and incapable of addressing my employers without the help of a third party or organized group." Through all this muddle, Silber emerges as neither faculty nor management, but as some sort of 20th Century academic chimera.

Other college faculty members are similarly confounded. And they raise serious and legitimate questions. What, if any, is the management function of the faculty? Is there a meaningful faculty function of management? Does an employee/employer relationship exist between faculty and administration or does a collegial atmosphere adequately substitute or merely obfuscate the need for such a relationship? Is collective action by the faculty antithetical to the goals of a com-

munity of scholars or the profession?

Much of this confusion is attributable to a basic misunderstanding by the American professoriat as to its collective function and purpose and the ambiguity as to what actually constitutes "The Profession." Professors G. Budig and S. Rives (*Academic Quicksand*, 1973) state that "the faculty claim to participation in college or university governance is rooted in the claim that teaching is a profession." Many professors would dispute this, arguing that one gains entrance to the profession of "professoring" only through membership in a professional society, i.e., one is first a mathematician, chemist, or historian and only then a college professor.

PROFESSIONALS AND PROFESSIONALISM

For our purposes, a profession will mean any area of human activity which requires some level of "advanced" skills or education to perform. Those participating in this activity must be either concerned with and/or responsible for its continued high quality and excellence. On the other hand, professionalism simply indicates the degree to which members of a profession exercise both individual and collective influence over the policies of the institution in which they work. Through this influence, they must impact upon the quality of the products or services they render or produce. It should not be surprising that enormous variations occur within a profession regarding the actual levels of professionalism experienced and practiced.

If we accept these definitions, and they are consistent with most others we are aware of, then many of the myriad, seeming contradictory statements and questions concerning professionalism become meaningless, for most have as a

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common denominator an underlying assumption that "professionalism" is an individualized commodity and, therefore, incompatible with any kind of collective action. The pivotal point of our argument is that this assumption is false. And that both historically and in modern practice, the terms "profession" and "professionalism" are inherently linked to group action and collective concepts.

This is particularly true when applied to a college or university faculty. Most would agree that there are a few universities in this country where the faculty exercises much of the institutional authority, and that the faculties at these institutions are, in a sense, "more professional" than their colleagues at colleges where the administrative bureaucracy is twice the size of the teaching faculty.

A FACULTY DREAM?

The kind of faculty influence that most professors dream of never existed in this country, even though it is commonly exercised in many European universities. This is due mainly to differences in the origins and organizational structures of European and American Universities. Professor Burton R. Clark points out (*Change Magazine*, October 1976) that "unlike medieval universities abroad, which originated as guilds of master professors (or occasionally students), colleges in America were organized from the top down, as founding groups in the colonial period set up boards of managers to hire and fire teachers, appoint and dismiss presidents and otherwise be responsible for the enterprise. Trustee authority thus became entrenched, before either administrative or faculty authority." Burton goes on to advance the notion that the devel-

opment of a strong administrative authority within American institutions flowed naturally from this trustee authority and that this was in "sharp contrast to developments and practices elsewhere." He cites France, Italy, Germany and Sweden as countries where virtually no campus central administration exists because "the professors did not want it and continued to rule locally through collective decision-making."

In a similar vein, Samuel Johnson arouses our curiosity and extends our insights with this advice: "The utmost expectation that experience can warrant is that members of the same profession should forbear open hostilities and secret machinations and when the whole *fraternity* is attacked, be able to unite against a common foe." To what was Johnson alluding? And what organizational form existed that offered *fraternity* and *unity* against a common foe? A union? Almost! In a previous article, "Bargaining for Academic Democracy" (*Changing Education*, 1976), we tried to show that if a community of scholars ever existed, it bore a kinship to the medieval guilds. These guilds appeared in Europe at approximately 1000 A.D. By the 12th Century they were quite common. Not for another two hundred years, however, does the word professor (a public teacher of the highest rank in a faculty of learning) enter the language of the laity. Professional (denoting an educated man, but not limited to law, medicine or theology) evolved into common usage in the 18th Century, but with more universal application.

"Between the amateur and the professional . . ." wrote Bernard DeVoto "there is a difference not only in degree, but in kind. The skillful man is, within the function of his skill, a different integration, a different nervous and muscular and psy-

chological organization . . . he is also criticism and wisdom" (*Across the Wide Missouri*, 1947). Through DeVoto a condition once enjoyed by educated persons reached renewed articulation.

According to Ellwood P. Cubberly in his *History of Education*, the purpose of teaching guilds was to "develop journeymen and masters, and certify to their proficiency in the teaching craft," much as craft unions did some centuries later and still do in their respective skills. A later development was the "giving of instruction to students for cultural ends, or a professional training for practical use aside from teaching . . ." Passing the Trivium (Latin tests in grammar, rhetoric and logic) earned advancement from apprenticeship to the ranks of journeyman. Allowed to assist the master and do some elementary instruction while continuing his studies, a journeyman became an assistant or companion, and by the 14th Century such a guildsman was known as a *baccalaureus*, which meant *beginner*. The bachelor's degree was sought at first by those not intending to teach, but as a rung on the career ladder to professional status.

As was the case with the craft guilds, so it was with the teaching guild. When a student finished (heard) a sufficient number of courses, as required by the statutes of the guild, he would present himself for examination for a teaching license—much as plumbers and welders do in our day. This was a public trial which took the form of a public disputation on some stated thesis in the presence of the masters. It became known as the students' "masterpiece," which was analogous to the masterpiece of any other guild, and was submitted to a jury of the masters of his craft. Once his masterpiece was adjudged satisfactory, he became a master in his craft of teaching and was permitted

to be known by various titles such as master, doctor or professor, all of which were synonymous terms. If he wished to teach one of the professional subjects, he continued his studies in one of the professional faculties until he earned the right to be called Doctor of Law, Medicine or Theology.

Other terminology of higher education and professionalism also came into usage during this period. For example, in the craft guilds of stone masons, after serving an initial apprenticeship of seven years (the probationary period before tenure?), a person was allowed to achieve the title of "fellow" of the craft. With more service and study he could become a "master" mason.

The resemblances within the guilds between craftsmen and the evolution of professions seem clear. Both contributed in language and procedures to the establishment of universities and the licensing of practitioners of professions. The latter developed into a system to preserve self-regulated standards and to prevent the overproduction of skilled manpower in order to keep the limited amount of work in "qualified" (professional) hands.

GUILDSMEN OF CRAFT AND BRAIN

Since guildsmen of both craft and brain were itinerant, the medieval guilds and brotherhoods invented "secrets," that is, methods to keep outsiders from gaining some kind of copyright in their crafts. Special handshakes, passwords, clothing and gowns came into usage to ward off the stranger and the imposter. It seems clear that the centuries during which the guilds came into being and flourished were the spawning period of the craft unions and the professions.

What happened to these antecedents? Prob-

"Not merely must he have security in his job, he must say how the college shall be conducted, and what higher education shall be. That means he must take from the trustees, and their hired man, the president, the greater part of their present functions."

ably, the rapid decline and destruction of feudalism, as the new capitalist economy arose, shattered the "family" nature of the guilds. And, as trade and industry exploded beyond the limits of the town, the guild masters saw their opportunity, and, except as limited by the banking and financial families (e.g., the Medici), became a new exploiting industrial class. The journeymen, fellows, teachers, etc., became the proletariat and the professoriat. In this process, the socially adhesive quality of an organization of common interests, the guilds, was lost for centuries. Yet, almost mysteriously, this longing of working people in all areas of employment to be included in the decision-making processes of their society lived on and is now being rediscovered. The organization of unions of teaching and other professionals has encouraged this development and given it impetus. Indeed, within the labor movement today, one finds not only teachers and college professors, but airline pilots, actors and actresses, artists, engineers, musicians, writers (who significantly selected the name, The Newspaper Guild) and a host of other professional employees.

It is apparent that the common origin of craftsmen and professionals was conceived in the womb of the medieval guilds. They flourished and served their members well for a long time but faded away during the industrial revolution. Karl Marx probably summed it up best when he said that the new ruling class "stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourers."

When translated into current campus euphemisms, these observations are relevant to our theme, for several important conclusions can

be drawn from them. First, college faculties of today, like their medieval counterparts, are *professional* only to the extent they exercise real and autonomous self-governance. The attainment of this goal has been a long and arduous struggle on American campuses because of the corporate management structure of the governing boards and central administration. The battle by faculties for attainment of professional goals and standards has been largely obscured and diluted by a variety of ineffectual schemes and systems of "shared governance." Second, we see that through the guild structure (not unlike a modern faculty union), European faculties exercised their rights of self-governance (and hence their professionalism) from the inception of the institutions. Finally, we must conclude that because of these fundamentally different forms of university governance, the American professoriat has always been a class of *employed professionals* while this occurrence is a more recent, albeit incomplete, phenomenon among institutions abroad.

Upton Sinclair best defined the challenge facing America's college professors when he wrote (*The Goose-Step*, 1922): "not merely must he have security in his job, he must say how the college shall be conducted, and what higher education shall be. That means he must take from the trustees, and their hired man, the president, the greater part of their present functions."

It is only in the above context that today's faculty collective bargaining movement is explicable. Present-day college professors expect, through their campus union, precisely those *rights and responsibilities* that their European colleagues enjoyed long ago through the mechanism of the guilds—clearly the precursors of today's trade union movement.